



***SAMUEL
G. GOODRICH***

***PETER PARLEY'S
TALES ABOUT
AMERICA AND
AUSTRALIA***

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Peter Parley's Tales About America and Australia

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CHAPTER I.

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PARLEY TELLS HOW AMERICA WAS FIRST DISCOVERED, AND ABOUT COLUMBUS THE DISCOVERER.

Now that I have given you an account of European cities in my "Tales about Europe," I shall now furnish you with some description of America, with its flourishing cities, and its multitude of ships, its fertile fields, its mighty rivers, its vast forests, and its millions of happy and industrious inhabitants, of which I am quite certain you must be very curious to know something, when you are told that though the world has been created nearly six thousand years, and many powerful nations have flourished and decayed, and are now scarcely remembered, yet it is only three hundred and seventy years ago since it was known that such a country as America existed.



It was in the year 1492, which you know is only 370 years since, on the third of August, a little before sunrise, that Christopher Columbus, undertaking the boldest enterprise that human genius ever conceived, or human talent and fortitude ever accomplished, set sail from Spain, for the discovery of the Western World.

I will now give you a short account of Columbus, who was one of the greatest men the world ever produced. He was born in the city of Genoa, in Italy; his family were almost all sailors, and he was brought up for a sailor also, and after being taught geography and various other things necessary for a sea captain to know, he was sent on board ship at the age of fourteen. Columbus was tall, muscular, and of a commanding aspect; his hair, light in youth, turned prematurely grey, and ere he reached the age of thirty was white as snow.

His first voyages were short ones, but after several years, desiring to see and learn more of distant countries, and thinking there were still new ones to be discovered, he went into the service of the King of Portugal and made many voyages to the western coast of Africa, and to the Canaries, and the Madeiras, and the Azores, islands lying off that coast, which were then the most westerly lands known to Europeans.

In his visits to these parts, one person informed him that his ship, sailing out farther to the west than usual, had picked up out of the sea a piece of wood curiously carved, and that very thick canes, like those which travellers had found in India, had been seen floating on the waves; also that great trees, torn up by the roots, had often been cast

on shore, and once two dead bodies of men, with strange features, neither like Europeans nor Africans, were driven on the coast of the Azores.

All these stories set Columbus thinking and considering that these strange things had come drifting over the sea from the west, he looked upon them as tokens sent from some unknown countries lying far distant in that quarter: he was therefore eager to sail away and explore, but as he had not money enough himself to fit out ships and hire sailors, he determined to go and try to persuade some king or some state to be at the expense of the trial.

First he went to his own countrymen the Genoese, but they would have nothing to say to him: he then submitted his plan to the Portuguese, but the King of Portugal, pretending to listen to him, got from him his plan, and perfidiously attempted to rob him of the honour of accomplishing it, by sending another person to pursue the same track which he had proposed.

The person they so basely employed did not succeed, but returned to Lisbon, execrating a plan he had not abilities to execute.

On discovering this treachery, Columbus quitted the kingdom in disgust and set out for Spain, to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. He was now so poor that he was frequently obliged to beg as he went along.

About half a league from Palos, a sea-port of Andalusia in Spain, on a solitary height, overlooking the sea-coast, and surrounded by a forest of pines, there stood, and now stands at the present day, an ancient convent of Franciscan friars.



A stranger, travelling on foot, accompanied by a young boy, stopped one day at the gate of the convent, and asked of the porter a little bread and water for his child.—That stranger was Columbus, accompanied by his son Diego.

While receiving this humble refreshment, the guardian of the convent, Friar Juan Perez, happening to pass, was taken with the appearance of the stranger, and being an intelligent man and acquainted with geographical science, he became interested with the conversation of Columbus, and was so struck with the grandeur of his project that he detained him as his guest and invited a friend of his, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, a resident of the town of Palos, to come and hear Columbus explain his plan.

Pinzon was one of the most intelligent sea captains of the day, and a distinguished navigator. He not only approved of his project, but offered to engage in it, and to assist him.

Juan Perez now advised Columbus to repair to court. Pinzon generously furnished him with the money for the journey, and the friar kindly took charge of his youthful son Diego, to maintain and educate him in the convent, which I am sure you will think was the greatest kindness he could have done him at that time.

Ferdinand and Isabella gave him hopes and promises, then they made difficulties and objections, and would do nothing. At last, after waiting five years, he was just setting off for England, where he had previously sent his brother Bartholomew, when he was induced to wait a little longer in Spain.

This little longer was two years, but then at last he had his reward, for queen Isabella stood his friend, and even offered to part with her own jewels in order to raise money to enable him to make preparations for the voyage, so that he contrived to fit out three very small vessels which altogether carried but one hundred and twenty men.

Two of the vessels were light *barques*, or barges built high at the prow and stern, with forecastles and cabins for the crew, but were without deck in the centre; only one of the three, the Santa Maria, was completely decked; on board of this, Columbus hoisted his flag. Martin Alonzo Pinzon commanded the Pinta, and his brother, Vincente Yanez Pinzon, the Nina. He set sail in the sight of a vast crowd, all praying for the success, but never expecting and scarcely hoping to see either him or any of his crews again.

Columbus first made sail for the Canaries, where he repaired his vessels: then taking leave of these islands, he

steered his course due west, across the great Atlantic ocean, where never ship had ploughed the waves before.

No sooner had they lost sight of land than the sailors' hearts began to fail them, and they bewailed themselves like men condemned to die: but Columbus cheered them with the hopes of the rich countries they were to discover.

After awhile they came within those regions where the trade-wind, as it is called, blows constantly from east to west without changing, which carried them on at a vast rate; but he judiciously concealed from his ignorant and timid crews the progress he made, lest they might be alarmed at the speed with which they were receding from home. After some time, they found the sea covered with weeds, as thick as a meadow with grass, and the sailors fancied that they should soon be stuck fast,—that they had reached the end of the navigable ocean, and that some strange thing would befall them.

Still, however, Columbus cheered them on, and the sight of a flock of birds encouraged them: but when they had been three weeks at sea and no land appeared, they grew desperate with fear, and plotted among themselves to force their commander to turn back again, lest all their provisions should be spent, or, if he refused, to throw him overboard.

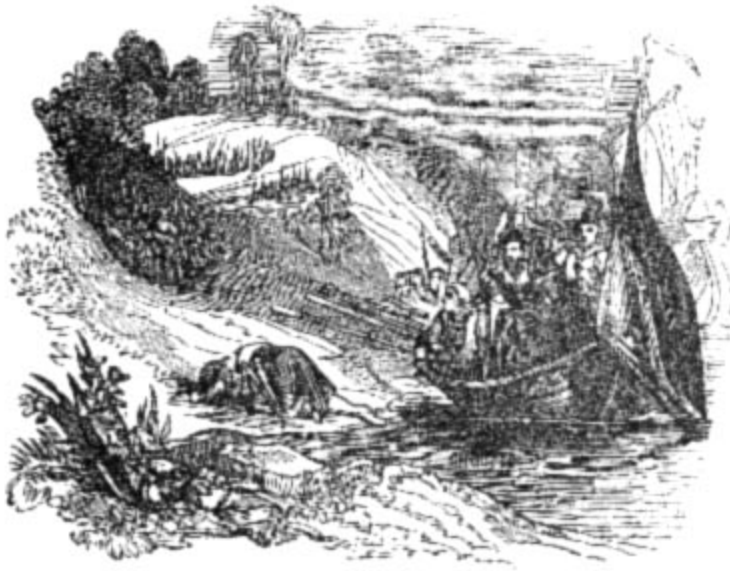
Columbus, however, made them a speech which had such an effect upon them that they became tolerably quiet for a week longer; they then grew so violent again that at last he was obliged to promise them that if they did not see land in three days, he would consent to give it up and sail home again.

But he was now almost sure that land was not far off: the sea grew shallower, and early every morning flocks of land birds began to flutter around them, and these all left the ship in the evening, as if to roost on shore. One of the vessels had picked up a cane newly cut, and another a branch covered with fresh red berries; and the air blew softer and warmer, and the wind began to vary.

That very night, Columbus ordered the sails to be taken in, and strict watch to be kept, in all the ships, for fear of running aground; he and all his men remained standing on the deck, looking out eagerly: at length he spied a distant light; he showed it to two of his officers, and they all plainly perceived it moving, as if carried backwards and forwards, from house to house.

Soon after the cry of "*Land! land!*" was heard from the foremost ship, and, at dawn of day, they plainly saw a beautiful island, green and woody, and watered with many pleasant streams, lying stretched before them.

As soon as the sun rose, the boats of the vessel were lowered and manned, and Columbus, in a rich and splendid dress of scarlet, entered the principal one. They then rowed towards the island, with their colours displayed, and warlike music, and other martial pomp.



Columbus was the first to leap on shore, to kiss the earth, and to thank God on his knees: his men followed, and throwing themselves at his feet they all thanked him for leading them thither, and begged his forgiveness for their disrespectful and unruly behaviour.

CHAPTER II.

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PARLEY DESCRIBES THE INHABITANTS.

The poor inhabitants, a simple and innocent people, with copper-coloured skins and long black hair, not curled, like the negroes, but floating on their shoulders, or bound in tresses round their heads, came flocking down to the beach and stood gazing in silent admiration.

The dress of the Spaniards, the whiteness of their skins, their beards, their arms, and the vast machines that seemed to move upon the waters with wings, which they supposed had, during the night, risen out of the sea, or come down from the clouds; the sound and flash of the guns, which they mistook for thunder and lightning: all these things appeared to them strange and surprising; they considered the Spaniards as children of the sun, and paid homage to them as gods.

The Europeans were hardly less amazed at the scene now before them. Every herb, and shrub, and tree, differed from those which flourished in Europe: the inhabitants appeared in the simple innocence of nature, entirely naked; their features were singular, but not disagreeable, and their manners gentle and timid.



The first act of Columbus was to take solemn and formal possession of the country in the name of his sovereign; this was done by planting the Spanish flag on the coast, and other ceremonies, which the poor natives looked upon with wonder, but could not understand.

Nor could there be an act of greater cruelty and injustice; for the Spaniards could not have any right to drive these gentle and peaceful inhabitants (as they afterwards did) from their peaceful abodes, which had been theirs and their fathers before them, perhaps for thousands of years, and in the end, utterly to destroy them, and take their land for themselves.

After performing this ceremony, of which Columbus himself could not foresee the consequences to the Indians, for he was very kind to them, he made them presents of trinkets and other trifles, with which they were greatly delighted, and brought him in return the fruits of their fields and groves, and a sort of bread called cassada, made from

the root of the yuca; with whatever else their own simple mode of life might afford.

Columbus then returned to his ship, accompanied by many of the islanders in their boats, which they called canoes; these simple and undiscerning children of nature having no foresight of the calamities and desolation which awaited their country.

This island was called by the natives Guanahini, and by the Spaniards St. Salvador: it is one of that cluster of West India Islands called the Bahamas, and if you look on the map you will see that it is the very first island that would present itself to a ship sailing direct from Spain.

Columbus did not continue his voyage for some days, as he wished to give all his sailors an opportunity of landing and seeing the wonders of the new-discovered world, and to take in a fresh supply of water, in which they were cheerfully assisted by the natives, who took them to the clearest springs and the sweetest and freshest streams, filling their casks and rolling them to the boats, and seeking in every way to gratify (as they believed) their celestial visitors.

Columbus having thus refreshed his crews, and supplied his ships with water, proceeded on his voyage. After visiting several smaller islands he discovered a large island which the natives called Cuba, and which still retains that name. This was so large an island that he at first thought it to be a new continent.

In proceeding along the coast, having observed that most of the people whom he had seen wore small plates of